

Exhibit 85

THE SECRET HISTORY OF **MARVEL** COMICS



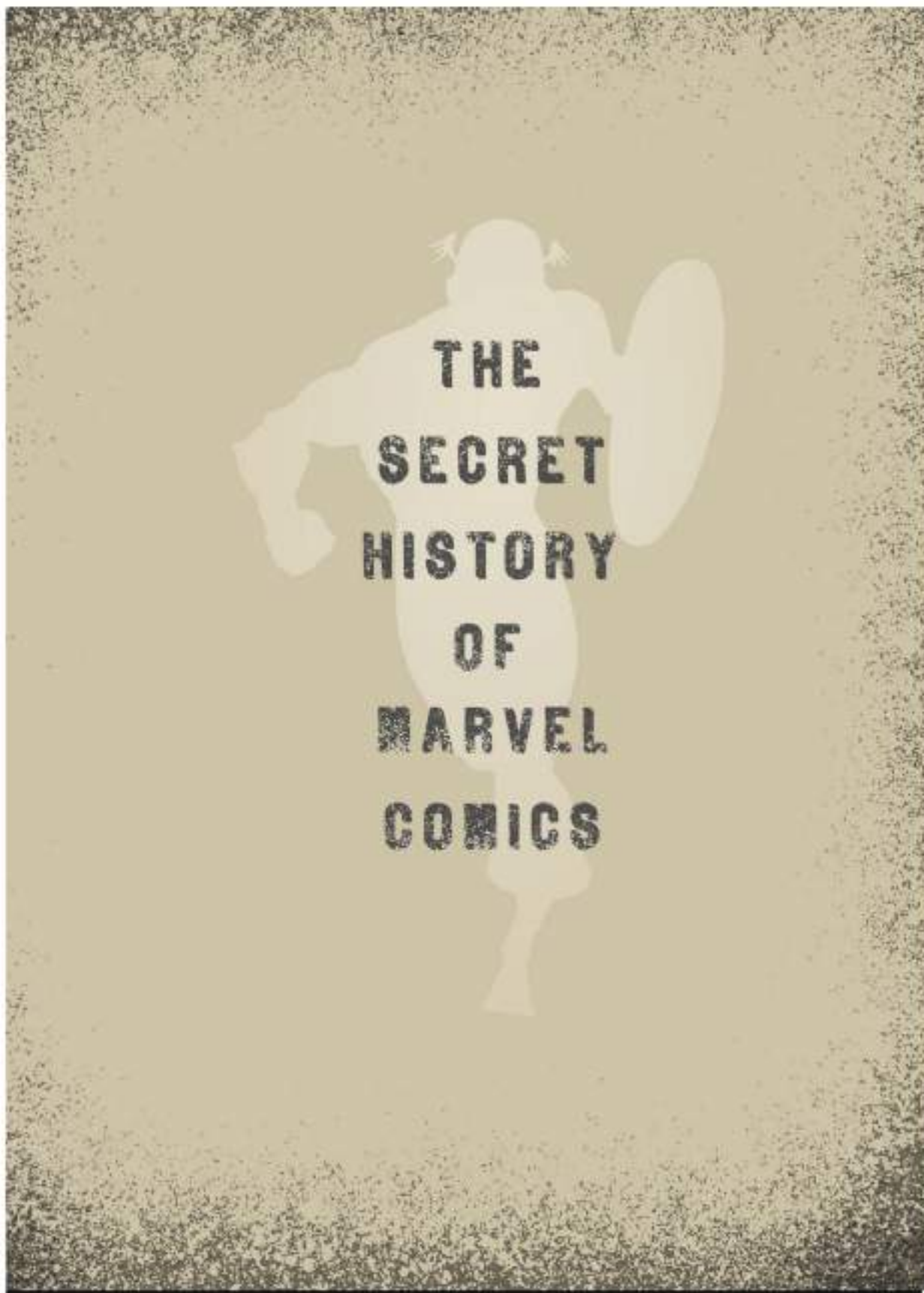
**JACK
KIRBY**

AND THE
MOONLIGHTING
ARTISTS AT MARTIN
GOODMAN'S
EMPIRE

BY
**BLAKE
BELL**

AND
**DR. MICHAEL
J. VASSALLO**

IRON CODE



1000

Follow the Leader

While Martin Goodman loved Westerns, he seemed to have no feel at all for action heroes. His very first action hero, while he was still partnered with Louis Silberkleit, was *The Masked Rider*, a Western character copied from *The Lone Ranger*, which was then a popular new radio program.

Even *The Masked Rider*'s name came from a phrase spoken during the opening narration of the Ranger's show. Perhaps wary of being sued, Goodman and his partner created a separate shell corporation to take the hit, just in case. Ever original, they called it *Ranger Publications*.

His second attempt at an action hero was *Ka-Zar*, a blatant copy of Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan*, then a hugely popular movie franchise starring Johnny Weissmuller. Goodman published *Ka-Zar* through his *Manly Publications* (a combination of the last syllables of his last name and his wife's maiden name).

When Goodman decided to enter the comic book arena, which demanded action heroes, he decided to revive *The Masked Rider* and *Ka-Zar* and let Lloyd Jacquet, his sub-contractor, work out the rest. By that time, though, ownership of *The Masked Rider* had changed hands and it was being published by someone else.

No problem. *Marvel Comics* #1 debuted with both *Ka-Zar* and — *The Masked Rider*. (p. 215)

On his own, those were the kind of creative decisions that Martin Goodman made. As for the

new characters that Jacquet's *Funnies, Inc.* crew came up with, they included Bill Everett's *The Sub-Mariner* and Carl Burgos's *The Human Torch*, which didn't copy anything that had come before — a first for Goodman.

The first patriotic hero in comics was *The Shield* by Irv Novick from MLJ (the rival publisher co-owned by Goodman's old mentor and partner, Silberkleit). *The Shield* looked good, so when Goodman's editor Joe Simon proposed something that looked similar, Goodman bought it. Simon enlisted his partner Jack Kirby and together they created *Captain America*, a character who wore an American-flag-inspired costume but was otherwise quite different from *The Shield*. But Simon did give Cap a literal shield — one that looked very much like it might have been pulled from *The Shield*'s costume.

That was too much for Silberkleit and MLJ, who complained loudly. *Captain America*'s shield was changed to a round disk with the second issue and has remained so ever since.

Martin Goodman was adept at putting out comic books but he lacked imagination when it came to what made those comics interesting to readers. Famously, he also resisted the idea of publishing *Spider-Man* when Stan Lee presented it to him.

For all his supposed expertise in publishing, Goodman's success always depended upon the creativity of those who worked for him. Yet he devalued their contributions and never accorded them the respect that they deserved.

comic books in the hope of duplicating the success of Doreenfeld's new *Superman* feature in *Action Comics* and his second hit, *Batman*, in *Detective Comics*. "MLJ" was an acronym for the first names of its three principals: Maurice Coyne, Louis Silberkleit, and John L. Goldwater.

(Goldwater and Coyne have also been rumored to have worked for Eastern but no evidence places them there — and Goldwater was only 16 when Eastern went bankrupt.)

MLJ's first title, *Blue Ribbon Comics*, debuted with a cover date of November 1939, just one month following Goodman's first comic book. *Top-Notch Comics*, *Pep Comics*, and *Zip Comics* followed in quick succession. All featured superheroes. But it was the introduction of Archie, Betty, and Jughead by writer Vic Bloom and artist Bob Montana in *Pep Comics* #22 (Veronica showed up four issues later) that ensured that Louis Silberkleit would never have to operate on a shoestring again.

TOP LEFT: Look familiar? From *Ranger Publications*, (Oct 38) Lincoln Hoffman appears to have edited the first two issues out of his home on the Upper West Side. Author Oscar Schnigall would later be a leader in the fight against pulp houses using reprints. *The Masked Rider* v1 #1, April 1934. Cover: Unknown.

TOP RIGHT: *The Masked Rider* v1 #2, May 1934. Cover: Unknown.

BOTTOM: Lf, Borklund would become Goodman's top Western pen-and-ink interior artist, drawing most such illustrations throughout the decade. *Complete Western Book Magazine* v3 #23, September 1934, p. 4-5. Art by L.F. Borklund.

WHEN LAWYERS CLASH

**“NO OTHER FIELD
OF ENDEAVOR IS SO
POPULATED WITH THE
GET-RICH-QUICK BOYS.”
— LITERARY DIGEST¹**

The action-movie-driven Marvel Entertainment empire of today evolved out of its 1996 bankruptcy, while the formation of Marvel Comics itself evolved out of the fallout from a 1932 bankruptcy. Eastern Distributing Corporation's collapse in October 1932 paved the on-ramp for Martin Goodman's entrance into publishing. From day one, Goodman applied the same business strategies and practices to the operations of his comic book business that he'd developed while publishing pulps and magazines.

Louis Silberkleit and Martin Goodman's first pulp magazine, *Western Supernovel Magazine*, debuted with a May 1933 cover date. *Black Book Detective* followed in June, *Romantic Love Secrets Magazine* in July, and *Gang World* in December. But even though Silberkleit and Goodman published them all, they didn't all come from the same "publisher."^{2 3 4 5}

Very early on, Silberkleit and Goodman began creating multiple additional publishing companies.

There was nothing different about them — same publisher, editor, office, etc. — but they did help to keep the accounts for each title separate. Other uses for that arrangement would come later. *Western Supernovel* and *Black Book Detective* were published by Newsstand Publications. *Romantic Love Secrets* was published by Graham Publications. *Gang World* was published by Spencer Publications.

Publishers' names weren't the only variable in the house of Silberkleit and Goodman. Titles could change on a whim. *Western Supernovel* became *Complete Western Book Magazine* with its second issue. It roamed the range until 1957, becoming Martin Goodman's longest-running pulp title. *Romantic Love Secrets Magazine* had only a brief fling. It changed its maiden name to *Romantic Love Magazine* for its June 1934 issue — and that was its bittersweet farewell. Meanwhile, *Gang World* was trying to cover up its past. Popular Publications had published it

¹ *Amazing Detective Cases* #9 #12, March 1949, p. 31. Art by Lee Ames.

previously, so when Silberkleit and Goodman took over that racket, they started with a new v1 #1. But crime did not pay (well enough). *Gang World* was rubbed out after only seven issues.

Within this nexus of cheap periodicals, multiple publishing fronts, and whirlwind title changes, the trends that defined Goodman's business principles began to emerge.

The *modus operandi* that Goodman adopted to satisfy his thirst for a quick profit at any cost (except, of course, for the cost of investing in quality original material) got him censured by the federal government on at least four occasions.

In addition, he was sued by employees and competitors and, like many of the low-rent pulp and magazine publishers that entered the comic book field in the 1930s, was forever labeled by freelancers and comic book historians as a swindler of creative talent.

Goodman's strength lay in circulation and distribution. For him, success meant jumping and pumping — jumping on a successful trend and pumping multiple similar titles (with the least possible investment) through the pipeline as fast as possible in order to rake in as much profit as possible.

Apparently, Silberkleit and Goodman could not wait to fill the pipeline of their new distribution company, Mutual. Even as they had a call out for original material for *Western Supernovel Magazine*, they rushed out the first issue, cover-dated May 1933, featuring "Jess Roundtree, Texas Ranger," a novel by Dane Coolidge. Despite a blurb proclaiming "A NEW COMPLETE \$2.00 NOVEL — 15¢" the novel was already in print, having been issued in hardcover only a few months earlier.

Not even the cover design was original. It looks suspiciously similar to early issues of *Dime Mystery* from Popular Publications, which carried the blurb "A New \$2.00 Detective Novel." Goodman's very first magazine tried to pass off old material for new and copied a competitor's cover design. It wouldn't be the last time.

But at least Jess Roundtree was identified properly on the cover. The second issue, re-titled *Complete Western Book Magazine* and dated June, featured the novel "Cold Trails" by author Alan Le May (some of his 1950s novels would later be adapted into films, most famously *The Searchers*, directed by John Ford and starring John Wayne, and *The Unforgiven*, directed by John Huston and starring

J.W. Scott

John Walter Scott (J.W. Scott) made his debut as cover artist on *Complete Western Book Magazine* v1 #5, October 1933. Scott became the most prolific cover painter for Goodman's pulp line, painting 307 covers between 1933 and 1943 across all genres. He was best known as the dean of Goodman's Western cover painters. Scott painted 53 of the first 80 covers for *Complete Western*. Norman Saunders painted the other 27.

According to pulp historian David Saunders (artist Norman Saunders's son), in "The Art and

Social Conditions of John Walter Scott" (Illustration Magazine, Summer 2005), Scott was introduced to Martin Goodman by friend and cover artist H. Winfield Scott (no relation). Goodman paid J.W. Scott \$20 per painting.

For an artist, in an industry where the next assignment was never certain, hooking up with a steady employer was a godsend. The company gained a reliable source for cover art and a distinctive "look" on the newsstand. Hugo Gernsback had Frank R. Paul, Harry Donenfeld had H.J. Ward, and Martin Goodman had J.W. Scott.

TOP ROW: (LEFT) *Complete Western Book Magazine* v10 #17, March 1938. Cover: J.W. Scott. (CENTER) *Complete Western Book Magazine* v8 #3, March 1937. Cover: J.W. Scott. (RIGHT) *Complete Western Book Magazine* v9 #3, November 1937. Cover: J.W. Scott.

CENTER ROW: (LEFT) *Western Short Stories* v1 #4, September 1937. Cover: J.W. Scott. (CENTER) *Complete Western Book Magazine* v11 #4, March 1939. Cover: J.W. Scott. (RIGHT) A Western title that Goodman would re-use as a comic book title in 1955, *Gunsake Western* v1 #4, October 1937. Cover: H.W. Scott.

BOTTOM ROW: (LEFT) Goodman took over this title in July 1938 from Tack Publishing and continued their numbering: *WW West Stories and Complete Novel* #137, April 1939. Cover: J.W. Scott. (CENTER) *Western Fiction Magazine* v4 #2, May 1938. Cover: J.W. Scott. (RIGHT) Another title that would become a comic book (1958–1957), *Quick Trigger Western Novel Magazine* v1 #6 September 1937. Cover: H.W. Scott.





Best Western Magazine v2 #4, March 1937. Cover: J.W. Scott.

considered Goodman's and Silberkleit's operations (by then the two were competitors) disreputable and harmful to their industry. By 1940, after many editorials — and letters to the federal government — they got cases against Goodman and Silberkleit in front of the Federal Trade Commission.

It took two years, but on January 5, 1942, the FTC slammed both Goodman and Silberkleit for deceptively reprinting stories as new fiction, substituting new titles for the original titles, changing the names of characters and, "without obtaining the sanction or authorization of the authors of stories, [substituting] pseudonyms or so-called 'house names' for the authors' names or pen names." They were also sanctioned for stripping the original copyrights and claiming the work as their own.⁷

With the judgment, as noted by *Writer's Digest* editor A.M. Mathieu, "No two-by-four printer, with a lot of brass nerve and a basement full of

Burt Lancaster) — except that Goodman renamed it "Fated Trails" and, again, neglected to mention it was a reprint — published just two months earlier, in the March and April issues of *Collier's*.

"I found that the Doubleday Doran syndicate would sell me novels for a hundred dollars apiece," said Goodman. "Some of them had been in hard covers, some had been originally written for *Collier's* at fancy prices."⁸

Trade publications were the only sources reporting on the business tactics of publishers like Silberkleit and Goodman. Eventually, however, competitors began to join with the trades — and the cheated writers — in the blowback. Two in particular, Harry Steeger (owner and publisher of Popular Publications) and Henry Ralston (publisher of Street & Smith),

paper, can buy up a flock of reprints, by hook or crook, and put them together under the title of *Argo*, and sell it on the newsstand next to *Argo* [one of the leading adventure pulps of the day]. Especially if the printer-fox is after *Argo's* customers."⁹

Goodman, Silberkleit, and the rest of the "get rich quick boys" now had to respect copyrights and inform their readers which stories were new and which were reprint. Paper rationing in World War II and the rise of comic books as a profit driver led Goodman to increase his comics output and decrease his pulp magazine output, but once Goodman was forced to behave more honestly, his profits took a serious hit.

Goodman seemed to view his punishment as more of an inconvenience than a lesson to be heeded.

More Westerns

Silberkleit and Goodman's fifth title, *The Masked Rider* v1 #1, April 1934, published by Ranger Publications, had as its debut novel "The Black Caballero," a reprint of author Oscar Schisgall's recent hardcover novel.

Their sixth title, *Western Novel and Short Stories* (v1 #1, April 1934), was released simultaneously with *The Masked Rider*, but was published by Newstand Publications, Inc. It was a sporadically "monthly" publication that lasted 16 volumes and 108 issues, into 1957. J.W. Scott painted 25 of the first 56 covers through April 1942. Norman Saunders painted

another 21 covers over the course of the title's run. Other cover artists include Richard Case and Allen Anderson.

The next title, *Western Fiction*, from Western Fiction Publishing Company, was the very first title completely owned by Martin Goodman. It debuted with v1 #1, January 1935, with a cover by J.W. Scott, under the editorship of "James Randall," a house name. Published primarily on a quarterly basis, *Western Fiction* lasted 26 issues, into 1939, with a 27th issue published as a coda a year later. Sixteen issues had cover paintings by J.W. Scott. H.W. Scott painted the covers for the September and November 1936 issues.

He ran afoul of the FTC at least three more times. The next two occasions were mirror images of the 1942 judgment, involving Goodman's pulps and paperback books. The third involved shady "promotion" practices for his magazines.

Just five years later, in 1947, the FTC issued a "cease and desist" order, having found that Goodman's line of pulps and crime digest paperbacks, published between 1942 and 1945, "falsely represented that their books and other publications contained original, complete and unabridged novels, stories or articles" and that "changing the title of novels, stories and articles without properly disclosing that such changes have been made was another practice found to be deceptive."⁹

Ten years later, in 1957, an FTC judgment was placed against Goodman, his wife Jean, and Frank Torpey (who had been the one to suggest that Goodman get into comics in the first place) for using the same methods in publishing paperback books as he had in pulps and comics. Goodman started Lion Books in 1949 (at first called Red Circle Books;

he recycled the brand from his 1937-1939 pulp line, then changed the name to Lion that same year). He published over 400 titles under the "Lion Books" and "Lion Library" brands before the FTC brought down



Artist Allen Anderson also painted covers for the first two issues of Goodman's sports comic book, *Sports Stars/Sports Action* in 1949-1950. *Three Western Novels Magazine* v1 #2, September 1948. Cover: Allen Anderson.

the hammer. Goodman had once again been caught buying novels, re-titling them, and passing them off as original material.¹⁰

Many fans and historians have believed that Lion Books' disappearance was a result of the 1957 collapse of Martin Goodman's national distributor, American News. That was true for his moribund pulp line but the circumstances for Lion Books were different. Goodman kept a couple of pulp-style digest titles going,¹¹ along with his magazine and comics lines. He had a reliable infrastructure in place for them, including magazine editors Noah Sarlat and Bruce Jay Friedman and comics editor Stan Lee.

But Lion Books was less stable, and complying with the FTC judgment would have increased Goodman's costs — he'd now be forced to pay higher rates for original material rather than reprinting cheap old material and passing it off as new.

Just as he'd demonstrated with his pulps in the early 1940s and with the crime digest paperbacks, if Goodman saw he wasn't able to make a quick profit, he would dump the entire enterprise rather than risk greater investment in a quality, sustainable product. The quick profit he was looking for came in the form of a hasty sale of Lion Books to New American

Books, who continued to release novels under their well-known Signet brand.

After the sale to New American, Goodman took one last shot at paperbacks. Between 1958 and 1960, Goodman turned out some 40 to 50 paperbacks under the Zenith Books label. But that was it. When paperback reprints of Marvel's superhero comics began to appear in 1966, it was through a licensing deal with Lancer Books.

Similarly, Goodman ran a handful of reprints in his 1950s Western and romance comic books without identifying them as such, thus tricking readers into believing that they were buying comics with all-new stories.¹²

(Goodman wasn't the only comic book publisher to get away with this. Pulp got no respect, but comic books were beneath notice. The FTC never looked into the practice of unlabeled reprints in comics.)

Goodman ran afoul of the FTC again in 1962. This time, he was ordered to stop paying "promotional allowances" to some retailers but not others, a violation of the Clayton Antitrust Act that prohibited such anticompetitive practices.

His punishment was a slap on the wrist: he had to submit a report detailing what he had done to bring his practices into compliance with the law.¹³



Sky fiction was a popular genre that dealt with aerial combat in World War I and the Sino-Japanese conflict. It got a boost in public interest in the latter part of 1938 as World War II got underway, but then faded in popularity — only to return with a bang after Pearl Harbor.

(LEFT) Sky Devils v1 #4, January 1939. Cover: LW. Scott. (CENTER) Sky Devils v1 #1, March 1938. Cover: LW. Scott. (RIGHT) Sky Devils v1 #5, April 1939. Cover: LW. Scott.



Walter Goodman's younger brother, Sidney Charles, edited a large swath of Goodman's sports and adventure pulps over a 17-month period in 1936–1937. He died in 1937 at age 21.

[LEFT] *Sports Action* v1 #1, December 1937. Cover: H.W. Scott. (CENTER) World Series champion and eight-time All-Star pitcher, Cleveland's Bob Feller in action. *Best Sports Magazine* v1 #3, June 1937. Editor: S. Charles Goodman. Cover: H.W. Scott. (RIGHT) *Star Sports Magazine* v1 #3, February 1937. Editor: S. Charles Goodman. Cover: J.W. Scott.

When superhero books became popular once again in the mid-1960s, Goodman wanted to exploit the early 1960s already-paid-for stories of characters like Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, and the Hulk that new Marvel readers might have missed. Recycling those stories was trickier because they were usually part of a continuing story and because of their easily identifiable visual aspects. Goodman solved that problem with *Marvel Tales* and other all-reprint titles, but he was wise enough to label them as such.

Pulps were gone by then and perhaps Goodman was learning that comics fans were interested in quality, after all.

Goodman always paid the writers and artists that worked for him only once for their work, no matter how many times it was reprinted or otherwise reused. Reprints were just one way for Goodman to squeeze more profit out of his original investment.

When the first Marvel character animated TV cartoons were created, the animation art was shot directly from the original Kirby and Ditko art pages. None of this was uncommon for Goodman — he had always reused illustrations, covers, and stories in his pulps. Both Kirby and Ditko resented seeing their work used in an entirely different form without compensation. It was an insult.

In 2007, comic book writer and historian Mark Evanier offered his insight into their feelings in his blog, *News From Me*: “A few months before Ditko announced his resignation, Marvel made the deal for the *Marvel Super-Heroes* cartoon show, the first time those characters were transferred to another, more lucrative medium. ... [Jack] Kirby and [Don] Heck were sure rankled that their poorly-paid comic book work was being transferred to television without any additional compensation. It would be surprising if Ditko wasn't. ... In any case, at the time Ditko left Marvel, he was well aware that his co-creation had been sold for a TV show and that there would likely be a flood of Spider-Man toys and merchandise, and that he wouldn't be sharing in that windfall. I can't think of another freelancer in comics who wasn't upset when he found himself in that situation ...”¹⁴

Not surprisingly, these and other dubious practices by Goodman led to a parade of litigation over the decades that went far beyond the federal government's actions, opening wounds in the comic book side of his business that still bleed to this day.

In 1941, Joe Simon, co-creator of Captain America with Jack Kirby, was told by Goodman's accountant, Maurice Coyne (apparently, when Coyne had helped found MLJ he had somehow managed to

keep his "day job"), that Goodman was piling all the costs of his business onto the *Captain America Comics* ledger sheet to make it appear that the book wasn't making a profit.

"Goodman offered 25 percent of the profits — 15 percent for me, 10 percent for the artists," says Simon. "We shook hands on the deal. Artists are notoriously poor businessmen."¹⁵

Mysteriously enough, no profits ever appeared, so there was no money to share with Simon and Kirby. They decided to shop around.

In late 1941, when Goodman learned that Simon and Kirby had approached DC Comics looking for a better deal, he accused them of being "moonlighters" and fired them.

With Captain America solely in Goodman's hands, decades of litigation ensued. Simon attempted to reclaim rights to the character, starting in the late 1960s when the copyright came due for renewal. Lawsuits continued to fly into the 21st century.

"Martin was making a fortune and bragging about it," said Kirby. "At the same time, he was claiming his best-selling book was making only a tiny profit."¹⁶

The team of Simon and Kirby were gone from Marvel for good. But some 15 years later, in 1956, after his studio arrangement with Simon had ended and he'd had a falling-out with an influential editor at DC — at a moment when the comics industry had fallen on hard times — Kirby returned.

"I didn't want Martin to think all was forgiven on the profits we never got on Captain America," Kirby said.¹⁷

Simon, Marvel's first in-house editor, never did go back.

Marvel's next really big breakout superhero after Captain America was Spider-Man, in 1962. The success of the wisecracking webslinger was also overshadowed by controversy over promises allegedly made by Goodman that were never kept.

That was one reason that Spider-Man's artist, Steve Ditko, left Marvel in late 1965, never to return to the character he had co-created with the feature's writer — and Marvel's editor-in-chief — Stan Lee.

"Much later," says Lee, "I asked Ditko if he would ever consider coming back to do one final Spider-Man story. To my surprise, he said, 'Not until Goodman pays me the royalties he owes me!' I had no idea what he was talking about, as Martin usually kept me apprised of such things."¹⁸

"Stan chose not to know, to hear, why I left," Ditko said about Lee, a Goodman relative and employee.¹⁹

The 1940s were a breeding ground for real and threatened lawsuits among the "pirates" of the day. Even friends took shots at each other. The shape of Captain America's shield was changed to round in *Captain America Comics* #2 (April 1941) to placate Goodman's mentor, Louis Silberkleit, who was already publishing *The Shield* at MLJ (see "Follow the Leader," p. 21). In *Captain America* #6 (September 1941), Simon and Kirby featured a villain called The Hangman, MLJ, which had a superhero with that name, again threatened legal action.²⁰

Goodman was used to such legal hassles in his non-comics businesses. In 1934, lawsuits had flown when the Shade brothers, Louis Silberkleit, and Goodman let their distribution company, Mutual Magazine Distributors, fall into bankruptcy.²¹

But sometimes the shoe was on the other foot. In the 1950s, Goodman threatened to sue *Playboy* owner Hugh Hefner over Hefner's original choice for his magazine's name — *Stag Party* — because it too closely resembled Goodman's magazine, *Stag*.²²

The battles involving Goodman, Lee, Ditko, and Kirby have scarred the comics industry, forever labeling Marvel and its ilk as run by the "get rich quick boys." Some creators, aggrieved at not getting paid when their work was exploited by Marvel's movie and merchandising enterprises, have sued (usually unsuccessfully). Others have left comics entirely. Still others have found satisfaction with a new breed of smaller but more creator-friendly comics publishers.

All of those battles had their genesis in how Goodman first conducted himself in his non-comics businesses.

Top-Nickel Weekly v2 #1, August 1938. Cover: L.W. Scott

BRAND? ECHH!

**“[MARTIN GOODMAN] USED TO
SPLIT MY SALARY UP INTO SIX
DIFFERENT CHECKS.”**

**— VINCE FAGO, TIMELY COMICS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF¹**

In the early days of back-issue comic book collecting, a novice collector might happen upon an interesting old comic, open it to the inside front cover, read the tiny type at the bottom, and wonder who Marvis Publications or Zenith Publishing Corp. were. If the collector was unwilling to invest in an unbranded book that kinda looked like a Marvel comic, he or she might very well put it back and walk away.

The odd names didn't end there. Over time, Martin Goodman's publishing empire encompassed 81 of these obscure entities — shell publishers, let's call them.²

A “Timely Comic” or even a “Marvel Comic” in the 1930s and 1940s was not Marvel Comics. An “Atlas comic” in the 1950s was not Marvel Comics. Only in the 1960s did the corporate branding stars align to make a Marvel comic a Marvel Comic. The

corporate name of the publisher still didn't become The Marvel Comics Group until 1973.³

(Marvel's rival, the solidly branded “DC Comics” was owned by National Periodical Publications, Inc. “DC Comics” wouldn't be published by “DC Comics Inc.” until a few years later, in 1977, when the company changed its name.)

From the beginning, Goodman and Louis Silberkleit played an elaborate game of corporate hide-and-seek. Their first two publications in 1933, *Western Supermodel Magazine* and *Black Book Detective*,⁴ were published by their start-up venture, Newsstand Publications.

But things turned curious with their third title, *Romantic Love Secrets*. The publisher was listed as Graham Publications.⁵

Curiouser still, their fourth title, *Gang World*, was listed as being published by Spencer Publications.⁶

¹Confession magazines were aimed at women interested in personal relationships, so you have to wonder who this pin-up style cover was supposed to attract. The misspelled word probably didn't help. Note the early Red Circle logo. A short-lived title, *Red Confessions* #1 #1, March 1937. Cover: Unknown (possibly *Four Drivers*).

Yet even though they all appeared to be coming from different publishers, house ads in early issues promoted each other.⁷

Thus began Goodman's and Silberkleit's creation of an intricate web of shell publishers for their magazines (in Goodman's case, sometimes approaching 50 at one time). The purpose was to shield Goodman (and Silberkleit) from legal liability — an ever-present threat due in large part to some questionable business practices. There may well have been tax and accounting advantages as well.

When Silberkleit divorced from Goodman in 1934, he eventually set up five different shell publishing entities: Winford Publications (with its Double-Action line of books), Chesterfield Publications, Inc., Northwest Publications, Inc., Close-Up, Inc., and, of most importance, Blue Ribbon Magazines, Inc., from which Archie Comics eventually sprouted.

Only in the late 1930s did Silberkleit create Columbia Publications, a sixth shell publisher, which so many fans have erroneously been led to believe was the parent company that preceded Archie Comics.

(Some have asserted that Columbia was founded prior to 1933 and that Goodman was part of it, but there is no evidence to support that claim, and no mention of Columbia Publications in the trade magazines of the day.)

Martin Goodman, like his pulp-publishing peers, put more effort into building his corporate web of shell publishers than he did into building a strong brand (which, right there, reveals the priori-

ties of the quick buck, low-brow publishing mindset of the 1930s.)

Since his start in 1933, there had been nothing on the cover of any of Goodman's pulp magazines to distinguish them as uniquely his. Even his first attempt at name branding was formed on a branding paradox.

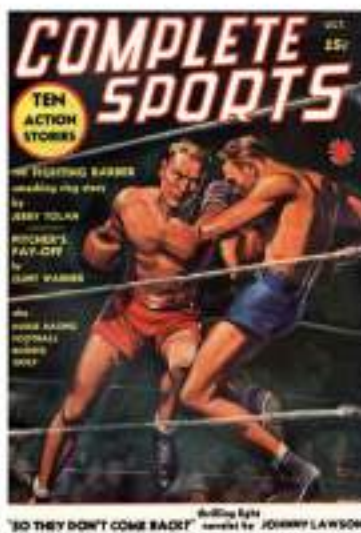
In 1936, he lifted the buzzword and image "star" from his *Star Detective Magazine* (published by shell publisher Western Fiction) and branded various titles in his line with the colophon "A Star Magazine."

In the same books, however, Goodman's pulp line referred to itself on all the ad pages as the "American Fiction Group," urging readers to refer to that name when responding to ads to inform advertisers where they'd seen a particular ad.

The "Star" branding appeared on the cover and spine of every Goodman pulp dated October 1936 through January 1937, with an additional few on the February 1937 covers — then disappeared with no explanation or replacement.

In the same month that the "Star" brand began to flame out, the "Red Circle" brand debuted. It dominated most Goodman pulp covers into 1939, but not all. Other Goodman shell publishing entities continued to pump out pulps without the "Red Circle" branding.

This lack of a branded identity for Goodman's pulps continued into his comic books. Because



LEFT: Another cover recycled. Here it is the first time ... *Complete Sports* v2 #21, October 1938. Cover: LW; Scott.

RIGHT: ...and again, only a year and a half later. *Complete Sports* v2 #25, April 1940. Cover: LW; Scott.



Some action covers from *Complete Sports* and *Sports Action*.

TOP LEFT: *Complete Sports* v3 #2, June 1941. Cover: Unknown.

TOP RIGHT: *Sports Action* v1 #2, June 1938. Cover: Unknown.

BOTTOM LEFT: *Sports Action* v2 #1, April-May 1939. Cover: H.W. Scott.

BOTTOM RIGHT: *Sports Action* v2 #6, October 1941. Cover: Unknown.

Goodman's first comic book, *Marvel Comics* #1 (October 1939) originated the name by which we now know the company, it isn't unreasonable to refer to Goodman's comic books of the 1940s as "Marvel Comics," but it's technically — and wildly — inaccurate. *Marvel Comics* #1 was issued under the shell publisher "Timely Publications."

Many think of "Timely" as the publisher for all of Goodman's comics from 1939 to 1949, but even that is incorrect.

Starting in the summer of 1941, the comic books were spun off to newly created shell publishers and, by December of 1942, some titles started hopping like frogs from one to another.

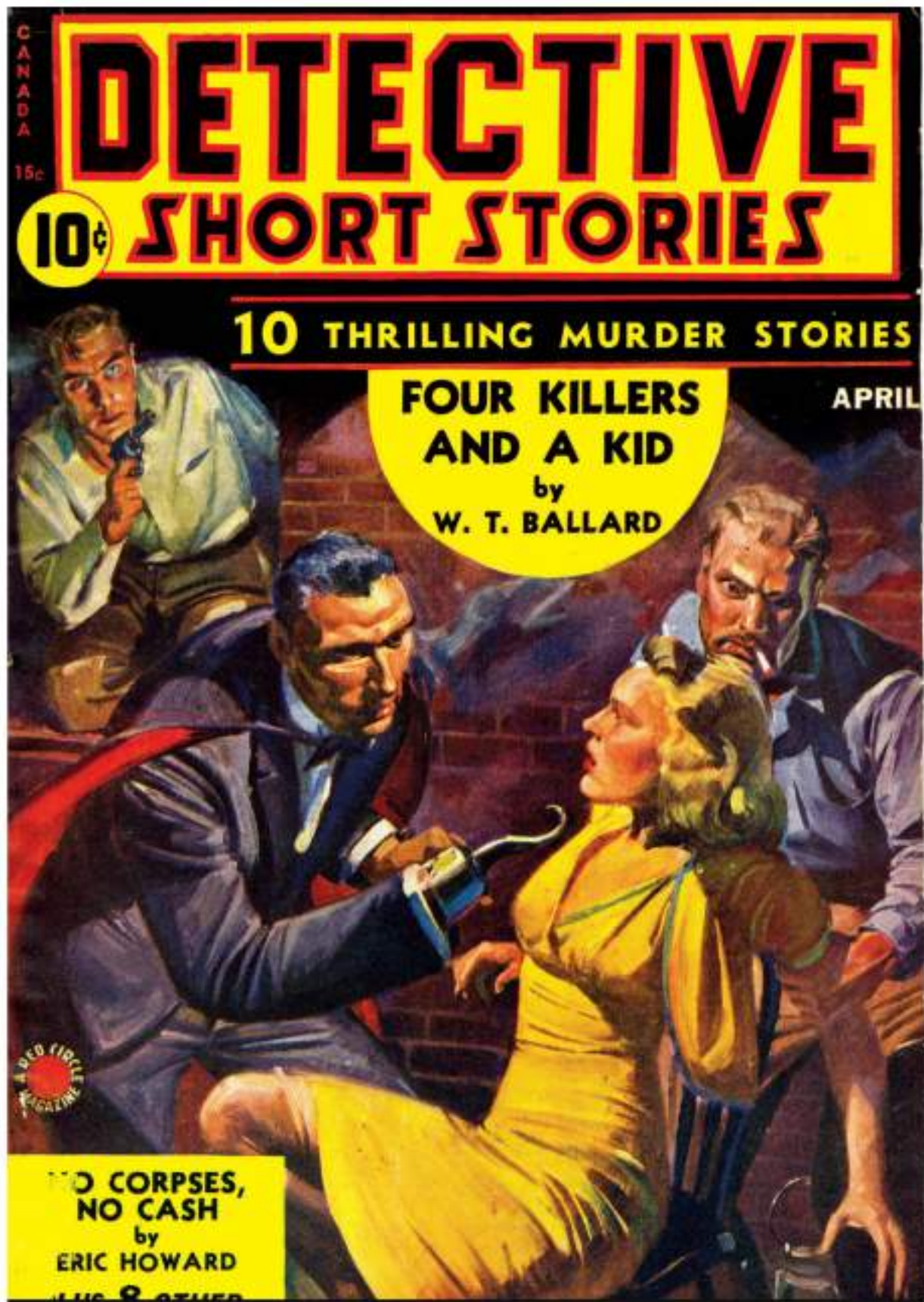
Sub-Mariner Comics #9, Spring 1943, took it one leap further, jumping to Manvis Publications, Inc., one of the shell entities Goodman used for his pulps. (Manvis was first used in 1936 for the first issue of the pulp, *Ka-Zar*.)

Goodman's attempts at establishing a brand for his comic book titles were as sporadic as they were for his non-comics publications. It wasn't until 1942, almost three years after *Marvel Comics* #1, that a "Timely Comics" colophon began appearing on the covers of some of Goodman's comic books. It lasted for only three months — July, August, and September.



The next branding attempt wasn't until 1946–1947, when some comics were dubbed "A Marvel Magazine" or "Marvel Group" in the December to May months. Then, from January 1949 to June 1950, most of Goodman's comic books were branded with a "Marvel Comic" logo that resembled Goodman's 1930s "Red Circle" pulp logo.

Most comic book fans refer to Goodman's 1950s comics line as "Atlas Comics" because of the globe symbol on the cover and some lackluster attempts at slogans in house ads to brand that name. But, again, that's inaccurate because the Atlas globe was really on the cover to inform



wholesalers of the name of the publication's distributor — Goodman's own company, which he ran from 1950 until 1956.

Where did Goodman get the name "Atlas"? In 1944, he placed the same Atlas globe logo that would become familiar to 1950s comics fans on the back of a line of paperback crime novels. He also named one of his shell publishers Atlas News Company. (Not to be confused with his later magazine distribution company, Atlas News Corp.)

The Atlas globe appears for the first time on one of his magazines on *Amazing Detective Cases* in early 1944. It first shows up on his comics on *Human Torch Comics* #14 and *All Winners Comics* #11 (both cover-dated Winter 1943-1944).⁹

Coincidentally — or perhaps not — his competitor, former partner, and old friend, Louis Silberkleit, had used the name Atlas Fiction Group, Inc., as early as 1941.

(Also coincidentally — or perhaps not — in 1973, Archie Comics debuted the Red Circle Comics Group, a sub-brand that published Comics Code-approved horror and superhero comics.)

Goodman's general neglect of a branding strategy is the antithesis of how strong, sustainable businesses were run in the 20th century and are run today. One can easily make the argument that the strength of the Marvel Comics brand that finally emerged in the 1960s highlights the potential of

what Goodman missed out on with his preference for chasing a quick buck.

Even the name of Goodman's parent company for all his enterprises was clouded in uncertainty through most of his history as owner. The original company name from 1933, Newsstand Publications, was never listed as a publisher of more than two pulp titles from 1934 through 1951. It disappeared from the pulp titles after that but continued as the shell publisher for a few comic book titles at least as late as *Gunslinger Western* #77, July 1963, and for at least one cartoon magazine, *Cartoons and Gags*, through at least 1968.¹⁰

Eventually, by 1947, the parent company for Martin Goodman's publications, both comics and non-comics, landed on the name Magazine Management Company. Even that name had its origins as a shell publisher (used only once) on *Read!* v1 #1, January 1943.¹¹

Goodman also subverted the advantage inherent in growing and maintaining a brand for his titles by changing his pulp and magazine titles incessantly — a practice he also carried into his comic book enterprise.

Marvel Comics, Goodman's first comic book, had its title changed with its second issue to *Marvel Mystery Comics*. This was a curious echo of the situation when Goodman and Silberkleit's first pulp, *Western Supernovel Magazine*, changed to *Complete Western Book Magazine* with its second issue.

Goodman not only switched titles around, but numbering, too. A new pulp title might pick up the numbering of a canceled one.



OPPOSITE: A Jack Kirby bonafide! Ten interior illustrations by Kirby. (See them in the Kirby section later in this book.) *Detective Short Stories* #3 #2, April 1941; Cover: J.W. Scott.

LEFT: *Detective Short Stories* v1 #1, July-August 1937. Cover: J.W. Scott.

RIGHT: "It's Your Funeral" turned out to be an ironic cover story. *Detective Short Stories* lasted into 1942, took a five-year hiatus, then gasped out its first issue, *Detective Short Stories* v4 #6, October 1947. Cover: Unknown. Interior illustrations by Allen Bellman.

DROWNING THE NEWSSTANDS

“IF YOU GET A TITLE THAT CATCHES ON, THEN ADD A FEW MORE, YOU’RE IN FOR A NICE PROFIT.”

— MARTIN GOODMAN¹

Working in a field he himself described as “full of pirates,” selling to readers whom he claimed were not interested in quality, Martin Goodman’s business plan became the publishing equivalent of ambulance chasing.

Rather than try to innovate, his strategy was to imitate. Let someone else risk their money experimenting with different types and genres of magazines, trying to discover the next popular trend. Once a winner emerged, Goodman would jump in with a knockoff. Or two. Or twelve, if he could get away with it. Keeping a keen eye on his competitors and quickly following their lead kept his costs and his risks low. Driven by an apparent contempt for his audience that rarely gave him pause, he never wavered from the belief that appealing to the lowest common denominator was far more predictable and, therefore, more profitable.

Consider the first part of the Goodman quote above — “If you get a title that catches on ...” Most

people might take that to mean, “If you *publish* a title that catches on ...” But Goodman could just as likely have meant, “If you *see* a title that catches on ...” (i.e., you don’t have to take the risk of trying something new) “then add a few more.”

Goodman was able to put that idea into practice by the end of the 1930s after consolidating control of his new publishing enterprise. In 1934, after a year of publishing pulps, editors Goodman and A. Lincoln Hoffman took over completely when their sister company, Mutual Magazine Distributors, Inc., was dissolved in bankruptcy. This forced the man in charge of both, Louis Silberkleit, to sell his interests to get out from under the debt.

Both Goodman and Hoffman had ambitions as publishers, and they agreed to split the five titles. Goodman continued as Newstand Publications with the titles *Complete Western Book* and *Western Novel and Short Stories*. Hoffman took *Black Book Detective*,

¹By editorial fiat, all detective, science fiction, and horror pulps required do-or-die-in-distress stories and covers. “Get sex into the story from the first paragraph ...” editor-in-chief Robert O. Erlanson told *Writer’s Digest* in September 1938. *All Star Detective* v1 #12 [W1], December 1941. Cover: LW, Scott.

Masked Rider, and *Gang World* (though he never published any issues of the latter) and the names of the two shell publishers that issued them, Ranger Publications and Spencer Publications. He even started a new one, Lincoln Hoffman Publications.

They moved out of 53 Park Place to separate offices but quickly got back together to share an office at 220 West 42nd Street. That enabled them to share certain overhead costs and consolidate other functions such as purchasing manuscripts and cross-advertising.

The arrangement lasted until February 1935, when Goodman moved from their shared space to larger offices at 11 West 42nd Street.

Unfortunately, Hoffman fell quickly. He launched three new titles: *The Gang Magazine*, *Greater Western Magazine*,¹ and *West*.

But by 1937, Hoffman had only three titles remaining — *Black Book Detective*, *Masked Rider*, and *West*. He bowed out and sold them to rival publisher Ned Pines.

(Pines, like Goodman, also ventured into comics in 1939 with the multi-named Standard/Better/Nedor/Thrilling/Pines comics line, best known for its hero, The Black Terror.)²

Goodman, now on his own, the sole arbiter of his destiny, put into play the publishing practices for his pulps and magazines that he would later apply to running Marvel Comics. The corporate shell game began to expand, leading to a sprawling and intricate web of publishing entities.

Goodman also began his strategy of chasing and imitating trends of more successful innovators (paying meagerly for the content), and he began what he became most infamous for in the industry: flooding the market once he caught the wave of another publisher's success.

Why court top talent when a strong title, a sharp cover, and a heavy newsstand presence seemed to suffice? Why give the audience more than what they already had shown enough interest in if a short-term profit could be realized? Why invest when your primary skill set was speculation?

Goodman had started in 1933 with what he knew from his childhood, the Western: stable and low-risk in those days. In complete control of his own business by 1935, he was ready to expand based exclusively on what was hot in the marketplace.

From publishing two titles in 1934 after the split with Hoffman, Goodman created a shell publisher named Western Fiction Publishing Company to start the flood. With *Complete Western Book Magazine* and *Western Novels and Short Stories* as the forerunners, Goodman began pumping out Western pulps, starting with *Western Fiction* and *Best Western* in 1935, followed by four more in 1936 and three more in 1937. Goodman even bought up other publishers' Western pulps. For example, he purchased *Wild West Stories* and *Complete Novel Magazine* from Teck Publishing in early 1938 (continuing the Teck numbering with #135, July 1938).

Pulp adventure heroes were also becoming popular in the 1930s. Street & Smith's *The Shadow* and Doc Savage survived the ravages of the Depression, as did Popular's *The Spider* (influential on a young Stan Lee). Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan* novels were serialized first in the pulps and the character was achieving new heights of popularity in an ongoing feature film series from MGM starring Johnny Weissmuller.

Echoing his earlier attempt to imitate the Lone Ranger with *The Masked Rider*, Goodman brazenly lifted the essence of Burroughs's creation and



ABOVE: *Detective Short Stories* #1 #2, November 1937. Cover: L.W. Scott.

OPPOSITE: A typical example of landscape romance. Original L.W. Scott cover painting for *Detective Short Stories* v1 #2, November 1937.

TORTURE PORN

“WE WANT PLENTY OF
SEX, HORROR, AND GORE.”

— GENE FORNSHELL,
A GOODMAN EDITOR¹

The most dubious trend that Goodman chased was that of the “shudder pulp” genre of the late 1930s. Remember those quaint comic book covers from the early 1940s that collectors dubbed “light bondage”? A typical one would feature a woman tied up by a villain as a hero rushed in to save her.

Unbeknownst to the impressionable minds of American children, an artist like Alex Schomburg would finish such a cover for, say, *Marvel Mystery Comics* and then next apply his brush to something a bit more extreme — and sadistic.

Shudder pulps served up savage sadomasochistic tales of satanic rituals with copious amounts of brutal rape and other violence towards women. Today, they would fall into a “satanic torture porn” category, a hyper-sexualized, ugly stepbrother to such movie franchises as *Saw* and *Hostel*. What slasher movies are to today’s moviegoers, shudder pulps were to 1930s readers. The trend started with the Popular

Publications pulps *Dime Mystery*, *Horror Stories*, and *Terror Tales*.

And where there was a trend, there was a Goodman pulp.

Goodman debuted *Detective Short Stories* and *Complete Detective* in 1937 and 1938, respectively. They were a harbinger of things to come. *Mystery Tales* and *Uncanny Tales* (titles that Goodman would recycle for comic books in the 1950s) followed shortly thereafter and were the pinnacle (or the nadir, perhaps) of Goodman’s foray into this arena of uninhibited depravity.

Consequently, Goodman made an actual attempt at branding his shudder pulps. But it was a muddled, clumsy effort because he also used it on some of his other titles, thus diluting what the brand stood for. Starting with the February 1937 covers, Goodman began placing a “Red Circle” logo on all of his shudder pulps and certain of his other pulp titles. The

¹ An example of the less wholesome side of Goodman’s pulp line, *Uncanny Tales* v3 #3, March 1940. Cover: J.W. Scott.

logo initially consisted of nothing more than a small red dot but later gained an outer black circle with the words "A Red Circle Magazine" in white letters surrounding the red dot.

Jerry Perles, Goodman's lawyer from the 1940s to the 1970s, said in a 1987 interview that contained many contradictions about the character of his client, "Martin was a worrier; he did not want to offend."²

But with stories in his 1937–1939 Red Circle pulps such as "New Girls For Satan's Blood-Ballet," "Queen of the Blood Brigade," "When Passion Corpses Dance," "Daughters of Lusting Torment," "The Girl Satan Gave Away," "School for Beasts," "Mistress of Death and Desire," "Souls for Satan's Creatures," "Rhapsody in Death," "Brides for the Damned," and "Satan's Wedding Night," it's hard to imagine what Goodman wouldn't have published if he thought he could get away with it.

The illustrations for "Yield, Lovely Maidens, to the Blood-Master" (p. 57) make the orgy scenes in Stanley Kubrick's final film, *Eyes Wide Shut*, look like a Nicholas Sparks tearjerker by comparison. The opening double-page tableau shows a scantily clad woman being forced to jump to her certain doom off a fiery platform onto a collection of large spikes — one of which has already claimed her unlucky predecessor, who lies thoroughly impaled, feebly struggling as her life oozes away into a puddle of her own gore. The whole ghastly scene is set in a nightclub full of drunken, tuxedoed sadists, leering and laughing at the evening's "entertainment." Oh, and more

women, one of whom is having her clothes ripped off, are lined up to go next.

Other stories feature full frontal nudity, women being whipped (their skin visibly torn to shreds) — some with their heads cut off — by Satan worshippers.

Bowing to demand from the pulp publishers for stories featuring similar scenes, the trade magazine *The Author & Journalist* published a how-to article for would-be writers of shudder pulp tales that would have blown apart the craniums of the employees of the later Comics Code Authority (whose job it was to censor Goodman's comic books).

Associate Editor Harry Adler lays out the story requirements in no uncertain words: "The horror story is frankly sadistic. Sadism, and its counterpart

SPINE-RAKING TERROR NOVEL OF THE NIGHTMARE KINGDOM OF THE DAMNED!

WHERE HELL HALLOWS ITS HARPIES by Holden Sanford Author of "Seven Pies a Bride," etc.

Here, then, was the lair of the sewer dwellers, the nightmare host of delirium-born creatures who'd lay waste our city and despoil its daughters—here, then, was the uttermost head-man of hell's own outcasts I'd come to call King!



"I can't stand any more," she begged. "I tell you I can't stand it!"

The lurid cover promises on Goodman's shudder pulps were fulfilled on the inside. *Mystery Tales* v3 #3, May 1940, p. 57. First issue. Artist Unknown.

masochism, are splashed upon the pages in heavy, unadulterated doses." Adler points prospective readers to Popular Publications' *Horror Stories* and *Terror Tales* and Goodman's Red Circle titles, *Mystery Tales*, *Uncanny Tales*, and the recently-converted-to-shudder-pulp *Marvel Tales* as markets actively seeking such fare.³

Most Goodman shudder pulp tales featured a detective plunging knee-deep into an underground world of unspeakable horrors, attempting to rescue a heroine who often times was found to be enjoying the soulless mayhem. Noted fantasy and science fiction author Ray Cummings wrote several of these stories, often under the byline "Ray King." Many of these nightmares of depravity featured illustrations

by Alex Schomburg; in fact, his earliest work for Martin Goodman was not on a superhero cover, but in pulps such as *Uncanny Tales*.

Even Goodman's one attempt at higher aspirations within the pulp milieu — science fiction, a re-emerging genre beloved of educated enthusiasts — soon sexualized its content in pursuit of the same level of profits that the shudder pulps were raking in.

Confirming that all things comic book had their genesis in Goodman's non-comics publications, the science fiction pulp *Marvel Science Stories* (v1 #1, August 1938) was the first Goodman publication to feature the word "Marvel" in its title. It debuted a full year before his first comic book, *Marvel Comics* #1, October 1939.

The name "Marvel," as researcher Joe Lovece has noted,⁴ could have come from a major Goodman advertiser, Marvel Home Utilities. But when Goodman changed the title of *Marvel Comics* to *Marvel Mystery Comics* with its second issue, that inevitably evoked the name of the popular and highly advertised automotive fuel additive, Marvel Mystery Oil, which has been around since 1923.⁵

Or maybe Martin Goodman just liked the fact that "Marvel" shared the first three letters of his first name. Whatever the case, Goodman most certainly viewed "Marvel" as a word that packed a sales punch.

Science fiction was on a rebound, with leading titles *Astounding Science-Fiction*, *Amazing Stories*, and *Thrilling Wonder Stories*. So Goodman went all out with *Marvel Science Stories*.



Whipped by charmed Alex Goodman told Martin Goodman's searing devil fetish was a throwback to his league, *Mystery Tales* v1 #2, September 1939, Cover: JWC Scott.



DWELLER IN DARKNESS

GRIPPING MYSTERY-HORROR NOVELETTE BY

Henry T. Sperry *Author of "Lies to the Devil's Dream," etc.*

Those numberless tiny claws gripped Daphne's soft body lasciviously and plucked relentlessly at her clothing—for this was not merely a mad devil horde that held her captive, but one pulsing, lusty, man-beast!



The cold hands of that night-mare being were becoming unpalatable to Daphne.

SUDDENLY Daphne was certain that more than one pair of eyes was looking at her. A shadow, a movement—something caught her attention, causing her abruptly to jerk her head to the right and gaze fixedly for a moment at the huge door of Circassian walnut which broke the ivory paneling of the north side of the room.

11

All signs point to Goodman regarding this as his one chance to lift his name out of the basement of pulp publishing.

The first issue featured a cover by Norman Saunders and three stories by *Weird Tales* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories* regular Henry Kuttner, one under his own name ("Avengers of Space") and two under the pseudonyms James Hall and Robert O. Kenyon.

Story illustrations also hailed back to Gernsback. Goodman hired Frank R. Paul, the dean of science fiction cover painters, to draw illustrations inside,

including a double-page splash for the lead novel, Arthur J. Burks's *Survival*. The Paul connection is doubly intriguing here as it was Paul who designed the original *Amazing Stories* logo for Gernsback and now was contributing to a book with a logo clearly derived from Paul's old work.

Goodman even gave himself a backhanded compliment on the contents page, boldly announcing "This Magazine Contains New Stories Only" just as he was knee-deep in industry complaints for reprinting stories without acknowledgment. He also

offered cash prizes in a contest for the best letters from readers about their favorite stories, reinforced by a half-page ad. Clearly the intent was to develop an intimate publisher/reader relationship, something Goodman had never tried in all his six years of publishing up to that time. It was an approach that Stan Lee would elevate to a high art with the "Bullpen Bulletins" and letters pages of Marvel Comics.

The second issue had a Frank R. Paul cover painting and exulted on the contents page that the editor of *Marvel Science Stories* was fortunate to secure the "greatest and best-loved science fiction artist." This was Paul's first science fiction cover in several years, as he had been toiling on Gernsback's radio-themed magazines while he sought out other accounts that included Henry Luce's recently launched *Life* magazine.

The third issue debuted the title's extensive letters page, "Under the Lens," modeled after *Astounding's* "Brass Tacks." The merits of Norman Saunders vs. Frank R. Paul as cover artist were debated, criticism of the back-up short stories by hack writers was aired, and commentary weighed the balance of hard science vs. human elements in the stories.

Alas, the return on investment was not quick enough for the impatient Goodman to develop a sustainable, quality book with an intimate connection to a devoted readership. *Marvel Science Stories* changed to *Marvel Tales* with its sixth issue (December 1939) and the content changed from hard science fiction to shudder pulp exploitation, with stories such as "Love's Lethal Ingredient," "Girls For Satan's Utopia," and "Last Rides the Roller Coaster" (the latter by Ray Cummings under a pen name). The letters page was likewise

YIELD, LOVELY MAIDENS, to the BLOOD-MASTER!

CHAPTER I

LOVELY DAUGHTER OF HORROR

THE girl who crept so furtively through Granville's dark streets was only a kid. She couldn't have been more than seventeen or eighteen, lovely and desirable in the

made her way through the night-shrouded thoroughfares, and in her eyes there was a burning, blazing hate—a hate so great that it went beyond reason, beyond sanity. It resolved itself to but one all-engrossing purpose—to kill, KILL!

The girl who crept so furtively through Granville's dark streets was mad, utterly mad. Always before her

by Donald Graham

Author of "Satan Lives for My Love," etc.

Purgatory could take my body and my soul, oh, Master, to pay for these mad moments—if I had not already given my body and my soul to you and your sweet torture!



"Blame! Blame! Oh, my God, I beg! I can't stand any more!" —And the response she got was: "Leave, leaving laughter!"



OPPOSITE: (TOP LEFT) You might think from its title that this would be a detective pulp. Not exactly. *Mystery Tales* v2 #6, February 1939. Cover: J.W. Scott. (BOTTOM LEFT) What's he going to do with that branding iron? *Mystery Tales* v3 #2, December 1939. Cover: J.W. Scott. (RIGHT) Hinting at bestiality and rape. What's he going to do with that woman? *Mystery Tales* v2 #5, November 1938, p. 51. Art by Hans Woson.

ABOVE: These are some of the most vile, racist examples of torture porn and gruesome death that the pulps ever offered: the genre was red hot, abetted by *Popular Publications' Horror Stories and Terror Tales*. But soon, the curtain would come down — to be replaced by the real horrors of World War II. *Mystery Tales* v5 #5, May 1940, p. 8-9. Artist Unknown (possibly Alex Schomberg).

LEFT: Unfortunately for these poor women, the Sub-Mariner hadn't been created yet. *Mystery Tales* v2 #5, November 1938. Cover: LW Scott.

RIGHT: Norman Saunders's first cover for Martin Goodman. *Complete Detective* v1 #1, May 1938. Cover: Norman Saunders.

dropped and Goodman's only reader-interaction venue was sadly lost.

Goodman seemed unable to find the right newsstand title surname to prop up his floundering "Marvel" pulp and changed the title again, this time to *Marvel Stories* with the November 1940 issue. Joe Simon and Jack Kirby contributed illustrations for all the fantasy stories inside, simultaneous with their work on Goodman's comic book line. Goodman also cross-promoted his comics inside with an original, one-page Human Torch story advertisement for *Marvel Mystery Comics*, illustrated by Carl Burgos (p. 42-43). The following issue, however, dated April 1941, was its last. (It returned briefly, as a straight, "hard" science fiction digest in 1950.)

As if sensing the sales problems with his Marvel-titled pulps, Goodman tried out a new word with *Dynamic Science Stories* v1 #1, February 1939 (p. 214). It features a cover by Frank R. Paul and story illustrations by Paul, Hans Wesso, Jack Binder, and Mark Marchioni. *Dynamic Science Stories* quickly veered towards shudder pulp content as well. The cover to the second issue, for example, depicts a supernatural fantasy with demons, a beautiful girl, scientific apparatus, and German Chancellor Adolph



Hitler! The story, Eando Binder's "Prison of Time," anticipates the coming World War even though, at the time the issue went on sale, sometime between December 1938 and February 1939, the world was still about nine months away from Germany's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939.

Goodman took another stab at this genre in his pulps, with *Uncanny Stories* (April 1941), featuring more Jack Kirby and Alex Schomburg illustrations with another Ray Cummings story inside, but it only lasted one issue.

This was symptomatic of what was happening in the pulp industry. Pulps were dying, even banned in Canada,⁶ comic books were on the rise, and World War II was about to put a crunch on paper supplies.

It was the advice of Goodman's confidant, Frank Torpey,⁷ which prompted Goodman to enter the comic book arena and publish the first issue of *Marvel Comics* in late 1939. Unsurprisingly, Goodman didn't want to invest in hiring an editor, writers, artists, letterers, and

OPPOSITE: A selection of science fiction covers.

TOP ROW: (LEFT) One last shot at science fiction/fantasy. There was no second issue and sci-fi was gone from Goodman's pulps until 1950, *Uncanny Stories* v1 #1, April 1941. Cover: LW Scott. Interior illustrations by Jack Kirby, Alex Schomburg. (CENTER) *Marvel Tales* v2 #1, May 1940. Cover: LW Scott. (RIGHT) *Uncanny Tales* v2 #6 (#1), April-May 1939. Cover: LW Scott. Interior illustrations by Alex Schomburg.

CENTER ROW: (LEFT) *Marvel Science Stories* v1 #5, August 1939. Cover: LW Scott. Interior illustrations by Jack Binder, Hans Wesso, Frank R. Paul. (CENTER) *Marvel Science Stories* v3 #1, November 1950. Cover: Norman Saunders. (RIGHT) *Marvel Science Stories* v3 #2, February 1951. Cover: Norman Saunders.

BOTTOM ROW: (LEFT) Wesso was a favorite of Hugo Gernsback, contributing futuristic interior pen-and-ink illustrations to *Amazing Stories* and *Amazing Stories Quarterly* in the late 1920s. *Marvel Science Stories* v1 #3, February 1939. Cover: Hans Wesso. Interior illustrations by Wesso, Frank R. Paul. (CENTER) *Dynamic Science Stories* v1 #2, April 1939. Cover: Norman Saunders. Interior illustrations by Jack Binder, Frank R. Paul, Hans Wesso. Final issue. (RIGHT) Classic fantasy cover. The earliest appearance of an angel-type character. Was Shee Lee paying attention? *Marvel Tales* v1 #46, December 1939. Cover: LW Scott.



colorists to produce a comic book. Too expensive and too risky. So he farmed the whole thing out.

Funnies, Inc., was a comic book "shop," a freelance producer of comic books. Shops were sort of like ad agencies, except instead of creating single advertisements, they conjured entire 64-page comic books on demand. Funnies was run by Lloyd Jacquet, who had started with Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson as the editor of *New Fun* #1, the first DC Comics title. So, with this commission from Goodman, Jacquet earned the historic distinction of being the editor of both the first DC comic and the first Marvel comic.

Among those working for Jacquet at the time were Bill Everett, Carl Burgos, and several other writers and artists who cross-pollinated Goodman's publications.

Marvel Comics #1 features a cover of the Human Torch by Frank R. Paul (p. 215). The issue is significant not only for its status as the first Marvel comic but also for the debuts of The Human Torch, created by Carl Burgos, and the Sub-Mariner, created by Bill Everett. Also in that issue, Goodman revived his

pulp character Ka-Zar, written and drawn by Ben Thompson, and debuted a swashbuckling caped action hero, The Angel, created by Paul Gustavson. (Goodman used the "Angel" name again for an otherwise unrelated detective in a 1941 pulp that saw only one issue.)

Goodman's first few comic book titles also had familiar pulp faces: Jack Binder drew Flexo the Rubber Man in *Mystic Comics* and Goodman pulp editor Robert O. Erisman contributed scripts to both *Daring Mystery Comics* (The Phantom Reporter) and *Mystic Comics* (The Three Xs).

The pulp industry decline started in 1940 and hit bottom in 1945 due to wartime paper restrictions. From Goodman's peak of 27 titles with 87 total issues in 1938, his output declined to just one title in 1943, the one he'd started with — *Complete Western Book Magazine*.

That year, 1943, Goodman poured his resources into his magazines and his comic books — and his attempts to flood those markets reached Biblical proportions.

Robert O. Erisman

In 1938, Robert O. Erisman, another Goodman relative, took over the editor's chair from Abraham Goodman, who moved up to become business manager in his brother's company. *Writer's Digest*, November 1938 announced: "The Red Circle Magazines of the RKO Building are all under the editorship of Robert O. Erisman now. These magazines had the reputation of using a great deal of reprint material in the past, but now are getting away from that and are buying a large percentage of new material."

(Goodman, no doubt, provided that last sentence in hopes of lessening pressure from the industry. But by 1940, the Federal Trade Commission was involved. It issued a judgment against Goodman in early 1942 for his deceptive reprint practices.)

In a feature titled "Meet the Editors" in *The Writer's Journal*, November 1940, Erisman is identified as "editorial director" of Newsstand Publications' string of Western, detective, sports, science fiction, and love

pulps. But Erisman didn't receive a credit line in the pulps he edited until early 1942.

Erisman also has scripting credits in *Daring Mystery Comics* and *Mystic Comics* as "R.O.E." and later picked up comic book editorial work during the war years when the pulp line was mostly suspended. After the war, he returned to Goodman's revived pulps as their sole editor until their end in 1957.

Abraham Goodman, in an interview by Robert Weinberg in the fanzine *Pulp*, v1 #10, Winter 1978, said: "Bob Erisman would read the outlines submitted by various authors, or the writer would discuss it verbally and go home with an assignment. At Red Circle, the day's work consisted of reading, editing to fit the pages allocated for the story, and illustrations. Every script was read in the manner in which speed reading is now in use. Those with potential were set aside for the editor and publisher to decide. I would say 90% were rejected. Additional scripts were purchased from the well-known literary agents like Scott, Gotham, Lerniger, Blossingame, Stevens, etc."

This issue saw a shift in cover emphasis from hard science fiction to softer fare. With the following issue, the stories got ratcheted up, too. *Marvel Science Stories* v1 #4, April-May 1939. Cover: Norman Saunders. Interior illustrations by Alex Schoenberg, Hans Weiss.

A HOUSE DIVIDED

**“I FELT THAT WE WERE A
COMPANY OF COPYCATS.”**

— STAN LEE¹

When Martin Goodman decided to venture into magazine publishing, he followed the same strategy that he used with his pulps: minimum expenditures on content and printing in the service of chasing a maximum return, quality be damned.

Beginning in the 1940s, a handy resource for all of Goodman's magazines and pulps became the comic book artists working just down the hall.

Even better for the artists, the magazine illustrations were required to be more lavish than the pulps and comics. Very possibly, the artists and illustrators viewed this as their opportunity to shine — perhaps to draw their way out of lowbrow entertainment and into respectability.

Any such ambition was destined to be fruitless. Goodman was a paper-pusher, not a cultivator of artistic or literary talent. Just as with Goodman's pulps, and later with his comics, when the sales

of another publisher's magazine popped up high enough on his circulation reports, he ramped up efforts to copy and then flood newsstands to gain as much market share as possible.

Goodman's first non-pulp magazine was titled *Sex Health Magazine*. Published in 1937, it was a blatant rip-off of Hugo Gernsback's *Sexology*, which ran from 1933 into the early 1960s, as well as similar sex hygiene publications that crowded the 1930s newsstands. *Sexology* had grown out of Gernsback's earlier magazine, *Your Body*; a response to Bernard Macfadden's *Physical Culture*.

There were no voyeuristic thrills in *Sex Health Magazine*. The digest-sized magazine offered advice in articles with titles such as “Young Men Who Are Impotent,” “Could We Do Without Sex?,” “Beware The Phony Sex Doctor,” and a 1940 medical take on homosexuality, “Queer Love.”²

¹From November 1941 to November 1942, three Goodman detective true crime titles sported painted, rather than photographic, covers — for a total of 11 issues from three different artists: Peter Driven, Norman Saunders, and Cordwell Higgins. *Amazing Detective Cases* #2 #4, August 1942. Cover: Cordwell Higgins.

If that wasn't enough of an oddity for Goodman to publish, he followed it up with two more stabs at the non-fiction market, *Complete Astrology*⁵ and *Racing Digest and Guide*.⁶ The latter was a monthly version of the *Daily Racing Form* tabloid newspaper, examining horseracing facts, tracks, and data. It provided betting guides and included lists of all upcoming races.

Reader's Digest was, and is, one of the most widely distributed magazines in the world, a carrot in front of the nose of a circulation maven like Goodman in 1939. One month before the release of *Marvel Comics* #1 — his first foray into comic books — Goodman made a play for the *Reader's Digest* audience with *Popular Digest*. The new magazine's tagline, "Timely Topics Condensed," was Goodman's earliest use of the term "Timely" (and, perhaps, a sideways attempt to also cash in on the popularity of *Time* magazine).⁷

Both *Popular Digest* and *Marvel Comics/Marvel Mystery Comics* were published by Timely

Publications, Inc., the shell publisher Goodman would use exclusively for the first few years of his comic book titles.⁸

Popular Digest turned out to be the only release from Timely Publications that was *not* a comic book — but it did have an effect on Marvel's longest-lived comic book title.

Historians have long wondered why *Captain America Comics* #1 carries the designation "v2 #1." The reason: *Popular Digest*'s final issue (January 1941), released two months before *Captain America Comics* #1 (March 1941), was numbered v1 #2.⁹ Goodman was notorious for canceling one title then slotting in a new one from the same shell publisher but keeping the same numbering.¹⁰

None of Goodman's earliest magazines sold well but, in 1939, with the "shudder pulps" in peril from the authorities, he decided to try something new — full-sized true crime detective "flats" (which, while similar in size to high-end upmarket magazines like *Ladies' Home Journal* or *Time*, didn't use the glossy



ABOVE: (LEFT) This title ran at least six years. *Sex Health Magazine* v3 #4, October 1940. (CENTER) *Sex Health Magazine* v5 #3, October 1942. (RIGHT) It is unknown how long this ran. *Racing Digest and Guide* v1 #1, March 1939.

OPPOSITE: An exclusive expose of Goodman's complete national amazing detective titles.

TOP ROW: (LEFT) *Exclusive Detective* v1 #2, November 1942. Cover: Peter Driban. (CENTER) *Exposé Detective* v1 #1, January 1942. Cover: Peter Driban. (RIGHT) *National Detective Cases* v2 #5, January 1942.

CENTER ROW: (LEFT) While art director of Goodman's true crime magazines, Joe Simon used mostly painted covers. *National Detective Cases* v1 #2, May 1941. Art Director: Joe Simon. Interior illustration by Jack Kirby. (CENTER) *Amazing Detective Cases* v1 #2, February 1941. Art Director: Joe Simon. Interior illustration by Jack Kirby. (RIGHT) *Amazing Detective Cases* v2 #1, February 1942. Cover: Norman Saunders.

BOTTOM ROW: (LEFT) *Amazing Detective Cases* v1 #3, June 1941, p. 27. Art Director: Joe Simon. Interior illustration by Jack Kirby. (CENTER) *Amazing Detective Cases* v2 #3, June 1942. Cover: Peter Driban. (RIGHT) *Complete Detective Cases* v3 #4, July 1941. Art Director: Joe Simon. Interior illustration by Jack Kirby.